4th Quarter
2009

"Rest well, yet sleep lightly and hear the call, if again sounded, to provide firepower for freedom…"

THE JERSEYMAN **7 Years - Nr. 64**

The Battle of Leyte Gulf (Cape Engaño) - October 24/25, 1944

"October 25th, 1210 hours - *From all indications, we were played for suckers..."* Sixty five years ago this month, the Battle of Leyte Gulf was fought as the largest naval battle in world history. At the time, Admiral Halsey was aboard his Third Fleet Flagship USS *New Jersey,* and so was Chief Petty Officer Victor Feltes, a crewman who kept a written diary that began when New Jersey was commissioned in May 1943. His diaries were donated to the Battleship New Jersey archives by his family, and his entries dated October 24/25 of 1944 and leading up to the Battle of Cape Engaño, are all included here. These extracts provide an hourly account of the days and hours leading up to Cape *Engaño,* as the battle, and a well executed Japanese deception unfolded...

"***October 24 -***

1029 - *Capt. tells crew that a Jap force of 4 BB's, 8 Cruisers and 13 DD's were sighted by a Cabot search plane this morn 240 mi from us, their position 122° long, (unreadable) lat., heading north by island of Mindoro. Reports coming in last 1½ days of this Fleet and another from South by Mindanao and also from China coast to combat our Leyte invasion. Last nite one of our subs put 4 torpedoes in a Jap BB which is considered sunk, and one sank a Cruiser and damaged another Cruiser. Our planes are now out after this Jap Task Force off of Mindoro. It will be a couple of hours before they reach their targets. He said he will keep us informed of events and hope it will be a good show.*

1048 - *Low flying planes coming in on DD Cushing and has one on her screen.*

1050 - *We were 25 miles off of Samar at 0700 this morn. One of our Task Groups at Ulithi rearming and on the way in. Could use them today.*

1058 - *DD Cushing reports a splash 1 Betty - still firing on the horizon.*

1130 - *Intrepid observing plane reports 2 torpedo hits on 2 enemy BB's.*

1200 - *Dinner—released men that could be spared.*

1330 - *Our search planes report following ships located in addition to those Captain mentioned. 1 light Cruiser and DD around Bataan. An Intrepid plane scored a hit on the Cruiser, 5 DD's on west coast of Panay, 1 believed sunk by a Franklin plane, 21 Cargo ships and 1 oiler in Manila Bay.*

1440 - *Cabot air strike reports following results. AA fire intense over Jap Task Force. 3 torpedo hits on 2 BB's. 2 planes scored bomb hits on Kongo Class BB, 1 bomb hit on a Yamato Class BB and 1 torpedo hit on a Nachi Class Cruiser. Where their carriers are is a mystery, and coming in with no air cover to speak of. It's suicide, me thinks. The Task Forces are separated by Island of Leyte.*

1847 - *Secured from GQ. Unofficial reports say our planes heavily damaged 2 BB's, 1 burning fiercely and other listing badly in water, sunk 2 DD's and a light Cruiser. Also Task Force 38.4 of 4 new BB's and carriers off of Luzon were attacked by carrier planes knocking down 150 of them. The USS Princeton, a light carrier, received a bomb hit on her flight deck this afternoon and is burning. Our position at 1915 - 126° long 13° lat. We are doing 25 knots, said to be heading north toward Luzon to help Task Group 38.4 dispose of Jap Task Force of Carriers and BB's.*

1945 - *General alarm rings. 2 raids of Bogies, 1 within 16 mi as we go to GQ. Secured at 2026.*

2050 - *Task Force 38.3 is now under attack by a Jap*

Task force of 3 BB's 3 heavy cruisers carriers and DD's. They are 70 miles apart. We are now 170 miles away and expect to be joining them in morning early for battle. The Bunker Hill and Hancock had left our task force for Ulithi. The Bunker Hill is supposed to have 40 flyers grounded from battle fatigue. They have been recalled to join us, tho low on bombs etc… Carriers in our Task Group 38.2 are Intrepid and Independence right now.
2140 -*Secured GQ. Expect to hear 16" go off in morning.*

October 25 -

0350 *Revielle -* ***0400*** *Breakfast.*
0515 *- GQ. Our task group made from 25-28 knots all night and we joined up forming a battle-line with the Washington, South Dakota, Massachusetts and Alabama, with cruisers and DD's, into Task Force 34. We are 200 miles east of Luzon, between 2 Jap Task Forces. 1 of which contains at least 3 BB's, 8 heavy cruisers, carriers and DD's. Captain wants all hands alert, looks like today is it! The USS Princeton was scuttled last night and a cruiser burning, heavily damaged while taking off crew from the explosions. Our carriers are low on bombs, but we have plenty of 16"shells. Our carriers are about 25 miles behind us in another task group. All ships have their long battle flags flying.*
0630 *- Night ship. We relinquished Fleet guide to Massachusetts so Japs won't know we are the Flagship. About 110 planes pass overhead on their way to strike the Japs.*
0735 - *One of our search planes has located a Jap Task Force of 17 ships, 60 miles off our Starboard bow. We have set a course to intercept them and attack.*
0832 *- Speeded up to 25 knots. Task group 38.3 reported under an attack.*
0845 *- 1st air strike sunk one large ship which was hit on the stern followed by a big explosion probably a heavy cruiser damaged, 1 light cruiser and 2 carriers, are burning fiercely. 1 carrier still untouched.*
0945 *- Japs are now retreating to north at 20 kts. They have split into 2 groups of 7 and 5 ships each. We are doing 26 knots and course of 330° trying to intercept.*
1020 *- Search plane reports 3 ships dead in water. Adm. Halsey orders plane to hit undamaged ships in Jap Task Force, saying Big Boys (U.S. BB's) will finish off the cripples.*
1025 *- Men released to eat chow.*
1048 *- General Alarm ringing. Group of 8 Bogies coming in at 25 miles. CAP shot down Bogie and was after another a short while ago.*
1124 *- Started sending men to chow again.*
1150 *- South Dakota spots Betty 25 miles away. C.A.P. after it.*
1210 *- From all indications, we were played for suckers...*

The Battle of Leyte Gulf… Between October 23rd and 25th of 1944, the Battle of Surigao Strait was but one of four nearly simultaneous major naval battles fought for Leyte Gulf. It was also the first, and last time in World War II, that line-of-battle ships fought from just a few miles apart. In about 15 minutes, Surigao became a major victory payback for Pearl Harbor, and fittingly, it included the classic naval tactic of "Crossing the T" executed by six old battleships. Four of them returned from the blood and mud of Pearl Harbor.

But it was also during these widely dispersed Battles for Leyte Gulf, and despite repeated cautions from Admiral Bogan, Arleigh Burke and many others, that Admiral Halsey made a controversial decision to send his Third Fleet north to Cape Engaño after decoy carriers, and to leave the ongoing Leyte landings unprotected.

Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet of nine Fleet carriers, eight light carriers, six battleships (USS *New Jersey* (flagship), *Iowa*, *Washington, Massachusetts, South Dakota* and *Alabama*,) 17 cruisers, 63 destroyers and more than 1,000 planes destroyed Admiral Ozawa's northern decoy force, and it finished the Imperial Japanese Navy as a fighting force. As the Engaño battle ended, and just about an hour before Chief Feltes began his 1210 entry on 25 October, five Japanese kamikaze planes flew into the flight decks of USS *White Plains* (CVE-66), USS *Kalinin Bay* (CVE-68), USS *Kitkun Bay* (CVE-71), and USS *St. Lo* (CVE-63), then 190 miles south of USS *New Jersey*. The USS *St. Lo* was the first American ship lost to a kamikaze at 1123 hours on 25 October, 1944. The Allied Flagship HMAS *Australia* was also hit on 21 October by what is believed to be the very first kamikaze, while supporting landings at Leyte Gulf. What the Japanese navy had failed to do was quickly replaced by land-based kamikaze suicide attacks. By the end of the war in August of 1945, it is estimated that over 3,000 kamikaze attacks killed or wounded more than 10,000 U.S. and Allied sailors and Marines. - TH

"13 Rugged Old Ladies…"

In July of 1945, *All Hands* magazine printed a history of battleships in World War II. Written over 64 years ago, and with the war still raging, the article that follows on the next few pages not only covered the old battleships, but it also gives the first details of October 1944 at Leyte Gulf, and the major naval victory by six aged battleships at Surigao Strait.

The All Hands article was sent to us by Gene Slover of Lamesa, Texas. *Thanks Gene...*

13 RUGGED OLD LADIES

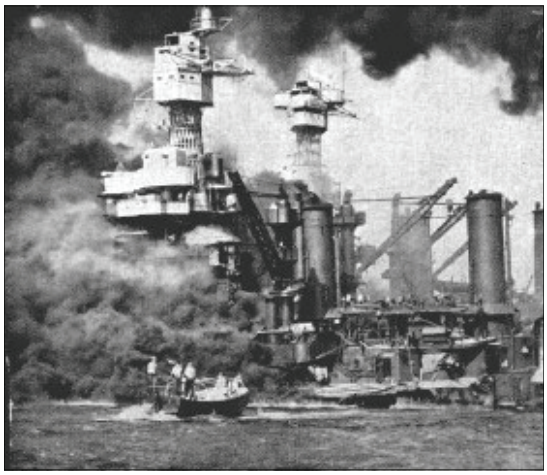
By Tom Bernard, Sp(X)1c

Out of the mud and degradation of Pearl Harbor has come a fleet of nautical ghosts which today hammers with unremitting fury the little men who devised and executed the opening attack of the Pacific war. From Normandy to Leyte, from Kiska to the Solomons this fleet of shadows has returned to haunt the high command which believed it had murdered and buried forever the seapower of a mighty nation.

To the men of the old Navy the names of the ghost ships are synonymous with unglamorous cruises to places where there was war, but for them no fighting. To Vera Cruz, Scapa Flow, the North Atlantic, the Firth of Forth; dull years of battle stations without battle. Today's youngsters know a different life, one jammed with violent give-and-take combat in major sea actions like Surigao Strait, in vital amphibious landings like Normandy and Iwo Jima.

Of the 17 battleships that formed the backbone of our fleet on that dreadful morning in December 1941 15 had been built or designed during World War 1 or before. And of those 15 old ladies, eight were anchored peacefully in Pearl Harbor. A few hours after the Japs attacked four were on the bottom, one was beached and three more were damaged - though six of the eight would fight again. Of the other seven, one was in a West Coast port, one in Iceland, the remaining five in East Coast ports or in the Atlantic.

PEARL HARBOR was intended by Japs to be graveyard of fleet's old battlewagons. Below, West Virginia and Tennessee burned side by side after attack. Official U. S. Navy photograph



By modern standards even the whole ones were hopelessly outmoded. The youngest of the l3-USS West Virginia--was 20 year old. And the oldest--USS Arkansas *was* commissioned in 1911. Not a hopeful picture for a Navy faced with the task of first recovering the initiative, then re-conquering lost islands and, finally, pushing back an enemy which had spread its empire over uncounted millions of miles of ocean. The battlewagons had only their huge main batteries with which to fight. And there was a reluctance to use them after the *York* nor the *Texas,* undamaged at Pearl, was "reckoned effective for war purposes." Most of the ships had been modernized during the dull days between wars. Their cage masts were replaced by tripods. Later, accurate, powerful five inch dual purpose guns, twin and quad mounts of .40s and .20 gave them defense against air attack. Their fire control systems were improved, their engine and boiler rooms refitted their navigating and detecting devices brought up to modern-day efficiency.

There had to be a testing ground for the ships in this new kind of war. Never had any of their guns blazed in actual combat except during the brief, inglorious interlude at Pearl when the AA guns of some destroyed attacking Jap planes. The Aleutians were selected for the test.

The Test

New Mexico, Idaho, Nevada. And *Pennsylvania,* the latter two damaged at Pearl, sallied forth on the softening up job. Their 14-inch gun batteries alert, they poked through heavy weather into Hols and Massacre Bays off Attu. Before the doughboys went ashore the big guns opened up in a pulverizing bombardment on enemy gun and troop positions effectively neutralizing them and easing the way for the ***Pennsylvania, New Mexico*** and ***Idaho*** were joined by the ***Mississippi*** and ***Tennessee*** for the assault on Kiska. Although Jap opposition was negligible, the five old wagons laid shell after shell on their targets, eliminating whatever guns had been on the island.

In blasting the Japs, the old battlewagons also blasted a theory which had been prevalent since the early part of the century in some naval and military circles. Before a House Naval Affairs Committee in 1916 an admiral testified: “This war has conclusively demonstrated what every military strategist knew before--that it is impossible for sea craft to successfully attack land fortifications.” Others echoed him later.

Although pro and con arguments were many since the admiral spoke, no one ever proved that he was wrong until Attu. No one, after the record established by these old battleships throughout the world since, will ever agree with him again.

The "old ladies" were definitely not the old-fashioned kind, as many people contended, who would lift their skirts and skitter away at the first sign of trouble. Rather, they liked it. For, old and lumbering as they were, they still packed dynamic punches in the barrel of their heavy guns, and never before had they had a chance to demonstrate to the world the strength that had been built into them so many years before.

Without a Shot

Back in 1914 when a war with Mexico seemed imminent, a fleet that even in these days could scare hell out of a sizable enemy force, steamed into Vera Cruz harbor to quell an uprising. Among the eight battleships anchored offshore were the ***New York, Wyoming*** and ***Arkansas,*** all young and innocent. A few days later the ***Texas*** steamed full speed into the harbor after interrupting her shakedown.

"What's going on?" her crew asked sailors of other ships. "Are we gonna fight? How soon do we open fire?"

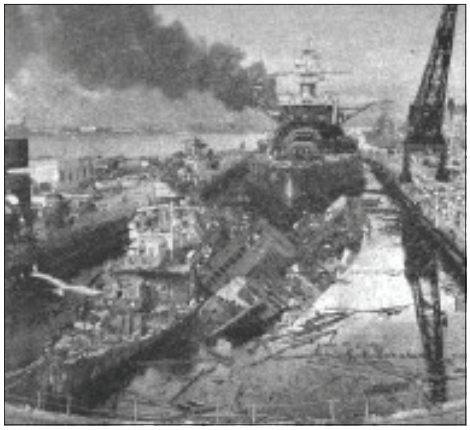
The answer was mighty discouraging. "The Marines went ashore and mopped up in a couple of hours."

It seemed the first full-fledged battleships of the Navy were destined for a fate like that. They missed World War 1's only hot naval battle, Jutland, because America had not yet entered the conflict. When they finally arrived in British waters their crews were immeasurably bored with a life of sitting and waiting for action that never came.

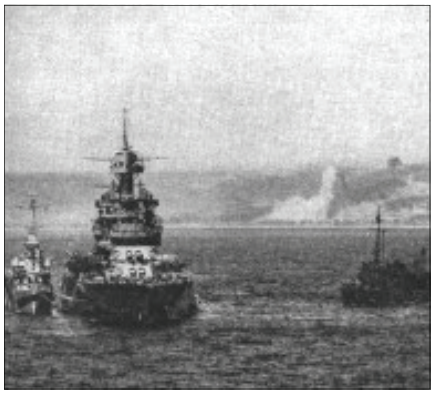
Utah, Oklahoma and ***Arizona*** joined the Royal Navy's English Channel fleet, helping to blockade the continent. ***New York, Texas, Arkansas*** and ***Wyoming*** became part of the British Home Fleet operating out of but mostly in Scapa Flow and the Firth of Forth. They participated in target shoots along with British battlewagons and scored impressive records. They put out to sea on reports that the German Grand Fleet was out and attempting to run the blockade. They dodged a few torpedoes from enemy submarines and watched their paravanes slash the waters of the North Sea in search of submerged mines. But the destroyers dropped the depth charges and did whatever attacking was to be done. And the infantry, the artillery and the fledgling air forces got credit for winning the war. Only when the German Grand Fleet steamed ignominiously between their lines back to Scapa Flow and surrender did they realize that their tiresome, persistent presence had helped toward victory. Despite their long years of world cruises and refitting between wars, the first battleground for three of the re-corseted old ladies was that same Atlantic in which they had sought action 25 years before. ***New York, Arkansas*** and ***Texas*** sailed from American East Coast ports in company with troopships, carriers, cruisers and destroyers. They were ready for the first major amphibious landing which would wrest back the first territory from the Axis.

Veteran U.S. Battleships Have Learned New Tricks To Become Potent Weapons of Modern Amphib War.

NEVADA was beached off Hospital Point when smoke cleared at Pearl Harbor, yet she fought at Normandy.



PENNSYLVANIA suffered relatively light damage at Pearl, escaping the fate of the DD's Downes and Cassin nearby.



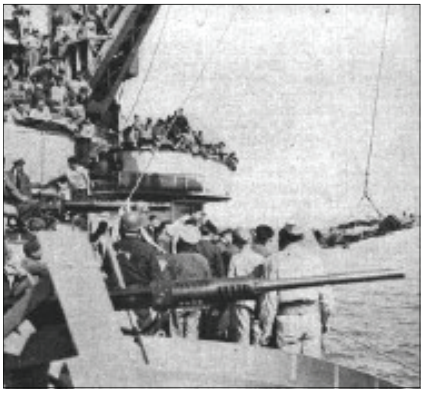
COLORADO helped in the job of reducing Saipan. As she lays to, phosphorus shells burst on shore in background.

North Africa was the objective. Moving in close with the **USS *Philadelphia,*** the ***New York*** lobbed her 14-inch projectiles into fire-control and rangefinder apparatus and heavy guns of the *Batterie Railleuse* protecting Safi harbor. The battery was put out of action.

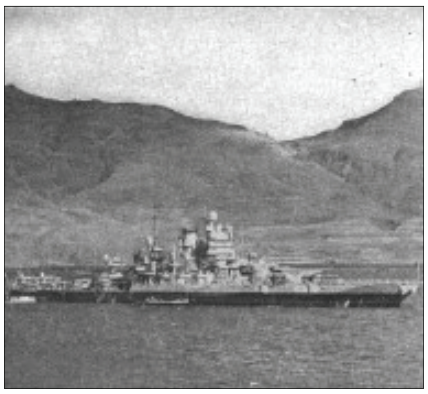
Meanwhile, the ***Texas*** was shelling Mehdia, near Casablanca, disrupting transport and blasting an ammo dump.

Arrangements had been secretly made with French garrisons beforehand so that the French put up only a token resistance in most places. But it gave the crews of the old battleships their first taste of war and prepared them for greater combat yet to come.

The true test of their ability to support amphibious operations came in June 1944 when ***Arkansas, Texas*** and ***Nevada,*** the latter damaged at Pearl Harbor, moved slowly up to the beaches of Normandy astern a line of DDs.



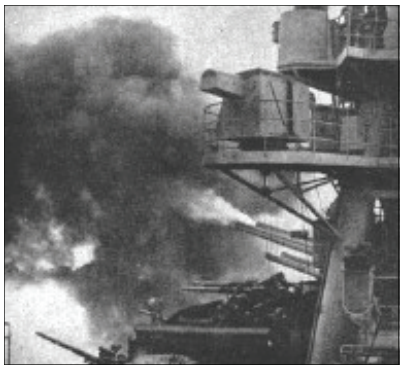
TEXAS took wounded Rangers aboard at Normandy. She was hit twice in a duel with Nazi batteries at Cherbourg.



IDAHO was among the BB's that softened Attu and Kiska, testing grounds for the old ladies in the new-type war.

For many minutes after the cruisers and destroyers started dueling with heavy German shore batteries, the battleships' heavy guns were silent. Then they opened fire on prearranged targets, sending their shells shrieking shoreward over the lighter vessels. As in the African operation each ship had specific targets to neutralize before H hour. The "Arky" blasted casemated guns near Les Moulins and Ste. Honorine des Pertes and other stationary target near Port en Bessin. The Texas' first target was a battery of casemated guns atop Point du Hoc, a prominence covering the Omaha beachhead from the west. Rangers were to scale du Hoc's cliffs and wipe out the guns' crews. The Texas plastered the emplacements before H hour, turned to targets of opportunity behind the beaches while the Rangers went into action. Then she turned her attention to machinegun emplacements hidden in a winding draw and an antiaircraft battery near Vierville sur Mer.

MARYLAND, of youngest class of old ladies, is shown as she appears today. With her is sister ship Colorado.



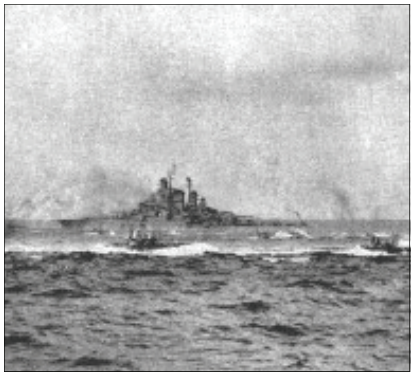
NEW YORK lashed out at Iwo Jima with her big guns. Once Hirohito visited her. Now she may return the visit.

Meanwhile the **Nevada** was hammering away at similar targets on Utah beach.

The surprised and routed Germans on the immediate beach defenses retreated inland. Tactically they were defeated only momentarily. They still had artillery with which they could bludgeon the great mass of men and materiel concentrated on the shores. From the rear, columns of enemy tanks, self-propelled guns and mobile mortars moved toward the sea. They had a 50-50 chance to push back the invaders.

But they reckoned without something new in sea-borne artillery. From their experience, warships at sea could fire at and hit only targets of opportunity visible from fire-control towers. Yankee ingenuity ended that idea.

In the first few waves of assault infantrymen to hit the beach were Shore Fire Control Parties, composed of one naval officer, one Army officer and 12 Army enlisted men. Each of these parties was attached to an infantry regiment. All were skilled in radio communications, map reading, naval gunnery. Each party was equipped with maps duplicating those of gunnery officers on the ships. As the assault troops advanced from the beach, running into opposition, the fire-control parties went ahead with them. From shore to ship the radio would signal: "Dog Easy Queen . . . this is Roger-Mike Jig . . . I have a message for you . . . target at (here map coordinates were given)… enemy pillbox… close supporting fire… commence fire immediately..."



TENNESSEE, shown at Iwo, lost her cage masts in post Pearl Harbor revamping and looks like a brand-new ship.

The old battlewagons' guns would roar. The pillbox would crumble under direct hits. The infantry would advance again.

During the early days of the Normandy landings the ***Nevada*** knocked out nine enemy tanks in one engagement with shore-directed fire. The ***Texas*** leveled the center of the town of Isigny [Sic], command post for Germans defending the left flank. The ***Arkansas*** knocked out a railroad train, several gun emplacements in the rear and broke up several tank and infantry counterattacks.

Nineteen days after D-day, the three old ladies took on their most hazardous assignment.

Duel at Cherbourg

Infantry had broken through stubborn German defenses near St. Lo and swept to the right up the Cherbourg Peninsula. From the land it was a tough task. Cherbourg was one of the best-defended ports on the continent. Scores of big guns guarded the barbed approaches. Others had been turned inland facing advancing U. S. troops.

Steaming at high speed off Cherbourg behind a smokescreen, the ***Arkansas, Nevada*** and ***Texas*** began pounding away at the guns and the town. Their opponents turned out to be the most formidable yet. Only quick maneuvering saved the ***Nevada.*** She was straddled 27 times during five shooting missions. The ***Arkansas*** also escaped damage but only after 280-mm. shore guns had dropped several heavy shells near her. ***Texas*** was not so lucky. Her guns boomed in unison with ***Arkansas*** and ***Nevada*** but she was straddled by the third salvo from enemy guns, During the three-hour engagement she was hit twice by heavy shells and had to fight two fires.

After Normandy and Cherbourg the three old battleships sailed down to the Mediterranean and there assisted in the landings in southern France.

Field Marshal von Rundstedt, commander of German armies in the west at the time of Normandy, admitted, after his capture, that American naval gunfire had penetrated far inland and made it impossible to bring up reserves in time to repel invading forces.

In the Gilberts and the Marshalls the ships the Japs believed they had sunk sailed close off shore, pouring their high explosive on every enemy installation likely to oppose landing troops.

At Tarawa and Makin in November 1943 a mighty task force prepared the way for the Marines. In that force were seven of the old ladies--***Tennessee, Colorado, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, New Mexico*** and ***Idaho.*** Two months later the same fleet moved into the Marshalls, pummeling the islands before and during the first landing on Kwajalein, 31 Jan. 1944.

But the real job was yet to come. Advances had been made, true, but American forces were still far from being within adequate striking distance of the Japanese homeland.

In the summer of 1944 the increased power of the Navy began to gain momentum . The pace was stepped up. American forces leaped thousands of miles nearer Japan with the invasion and conquest of the Marianas--Saipan, Guam, Tinian.

Two of the venerable battleships- ***Tennessee*** and ***Pennsylvania***- added another valorous chapter to a tradition of gallant teamwork which started in the Aleutians. The *Tenn-Penn* combination previously had worked together in the Gilberts and the Marshalls. In the Marianas they labored like the old war horses they had now become.

Both the ***Tennessee*** and ***Pennsylvania*** shuttled back and forth between the three islands during the entire Marianas campaign. Sometimes they softened up islands not yet invaded. Then they would dash over to another island and pound stubborn Japs holding up a Marine advance.

On Guam alone the ***Pennsylvania's*** guns destroyed 15 planes on the ground; six large guns; eight medium guns; three five-inch guns; a dozen machine guns; 19 dual-purpose guns; two coastal defense guns; eight antiaircraft guns; four twin mounts; nine heavy antiaircraft guns; a dozen three-inch guns; two anti-boat guns and numerous mortars and field artillery. During one period her guns fired at the Japs for 16 consecutive days.

After the Marianas campaign the *Tenn-Penn* team was assigned to a carrier task force which was to carry the war eventually even closer to the Nipponese homeland. On 6 September they started pumping shells into the Palaus while carrier planes tore at airstrips and guns and Japs. For nine days they worked the Islands over. Then the troops went ashore. The ***Pennsylvania*** alone hurled 900 rounds of 14·inch projectiles from her blazing rifle barrels on the two islands.

With landing after landing going into their logs, the old but still mighty wagons were becoming a proficient with their guns as small boys with sling shots. When the big show came along there were five of them on hand to lend support to the carriers, cruisers, destroyer and new battleships.

The ***Pennsylvania-Tennessee*** team was part of the fleet which steamed off the Philippines and, on 20 October, they struck. Typically, the ***Pennsylvania*** was the first battleship to enter Leyte Gulf. Others soon followed, belching their flaming broadsides in an announcement of the Navy's return to a land it had so often visited.

As the liberation of the Philippines progressed and more landings were made, the old ladies helped out with their 14-inchers. But greatest and most gratifying of all was the Surigao Strait action on 25 October· when, at long last, they actually engaged an enemy surface force and won.

Up from the south came a powerful Jap force, one of three bent on halting the Navy's Philippine action. Two Jap battleships, one heavy cruiser and four destroyers headed toward Surigao Strait. PT boats feinted first with torpedoes. The enemy came on. U. S. destroyers moved in to attack. The Japs kept coming at 20 knots. Then the cruisers and the battleships-***West Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee, California*** **and** ***Pennsylvania.-*** opened fire. The Jap fleet staggered, slowed to 12 knots under the massed American fire. It was too much for the Japs. Shell after shell scored direct hits on every unit. They tried to turn and run for it. Only one cruiser, later sunk by planes, and one destroyer made it. The rest went down.

During the Lingayen Gulf landings on Luzon, early this year, the old ladies again put in their heavy licks. It was there that a Jap bomb struck the port navigating bridge of the ***New Mexico,*** killing her skipper, Capt. Robert Fleming, USN, and 29 others. Still the valiant battleship fought on until the beaches were secured five days later.

Closing the Range

If the old ships never fired another shot or steamed another mile they had more than repaid the Navy for their initial cost and their upkeep during all the years of peace. But on they drove, closer and closer to Japan. On 19 February six of tbem-***Tennessee , NewYork, Texas, Nevada, Arkansas*** and ***Idaho-***stood off 1wo Jima, 625 miles from Tokyo. For the entire 16

days that the Marines battled through the volcanic ash of the tiny isle, they poured their shells into the Jap defenders.

That they will go on until their guns can plaster the Japs in their own homes there is little doubt. Perhaps the ***New York*** should have the honor of firing first.

On 3 Nov. 1918 a suave, distinguished visitor boarded the ***New York*** in Scapa Flow. The visitor was accorded all the honor of royalty, for he was, after all, a royal prince- Hirohito, son of the Emperor of Japan. The inspection was brief but formal, more important diplomatically than for any other reason.

The ***New York*** would like to repay that visit. And her crew would like to make it a long one and no more formal than the Japs can manage with 14-inch shells dropping in their midst.

USS *Tennessee...*

I was serving in USS TENNESSEE during the Surigao battle, and was in the FC Division stationed in the Main Battery Plotting Room. I was at the ripe old age of eighteen at the time and had participated in all of the bombardments and landings of Saipan, Guam, Pelileu Tinian and Leyte. My basic plotting room duty that night was to help set up the control board which linked the FC Directors to the computers, and to the 14 inch turrets. In this circuit was a device known as the "stable vertical". This machine was basically a gyro that would sense the roll and pitch of the ship and would only allow the guns to fire when they were in a predetermined position, hopefully on target. These "stable verticals" were equipped with piston type grips and triggers. When the order to fire was given the trigger was pulled and the gyros determined when the circuit was activated.

During the Battle of Surigao many of us took turns pulling the trigger, confident that the result would do damage to the enemy. It was a small diversion created to help calm the nerves of a very tense group. At the time, we never thought we were participating in a history making event, that would become *the* final "Crossing of the "T", recorded in naval history.

John C. Dussault
San Diego, California

USS *Tennessee…*

On October 20th after a busy day defending the beachhead from aerial attack, the fleet laid down a massive smoke screen for protection. While we had a few minutes to go topside, have a smoke, and look around at the landing area, a few of us were back on the Port Quarter. At about 2000 hours, and out of the smoke, came the troopship USS *Warhawk!* She rammed into our port quarter just a few feet from where we were standing. Needless to say we ran as fast a possible for some area forward of that spot.

Then came the Battle of Surigao Strait where we blocked the entrance to the Strait. USS *Tennessee* fired 69 rounds of 14" armor piercing shells. It was a good day for the "Old Battleships" and who survived the Pearl Harbor attack. It turned out that it was these "OLD" Pearl Harbor BB's (*Rear Admiral Jesse Oldendorf always called us the "Senior Battleships"*), that had the chance to payback the Japanese for their sneak attack. It took about 13 minutes from commence firing to cease firing to end it all.

Now after four (4) bombardments and South Pacific landings, we were in need of some major repairs and were scheduled back to Bremerton shipyard. While enroute it was necessary to stop at Pearl Harbor, and as we came dockside the word was passed that there would be an Admiral's Inspection the next day at 1200 hours. Everyone spent the rest of their available time getting 'spit shining' shoes, cleaning dungarees and getting hair cuts before inspection.

The time came, we were all in formation on deck, and we learned the Inspector would be Admiral Nimitz, the Big Boss. He completed the inspection and as he passed the communications division he stopped in front of me and asked me to step out. Well that was a shock and I complied. As he continued down the formation I heard him repeat the command to another radioman to step out. After inspection closed our Division Officer, Commander Di Pirro, told us the Admiral thought we were looking ill and to report to sick bay at once. From working one watch in three we had little time to get topside so Eddie and I didn't have the healthy tan the rest of the crew had. We were given a jug of Liver and Iron tablets to take but after a week we were so constipated we tossed them over the side. Seeing Admiral Nimitz face to face was an intimidating experience but the thing I remember most was that he had the bluest eyes I had ever seen.

Ralph W. Galow RM3/C -
Willow Grove, Pennsylvania

USS *Pennsylvania...*

I am George L Hollenbeck (SM1/c), and was stationed aboard the battleship Pennsylvania in Leyte Gulf on 0ctober 24,1944.

Our carrier search planes had located Japanese battle groups headed toward Leyte Gulf, one group was in the Sulu Sea headed for Surigao Strait which is the southern entrance to Leyte Gulf. Our naval forces protecting the landings were composed of battleships, cruisers, destroyers and PT-boats. During the afternoon of the 24th, the destroyers and PT-boats headed south into the Strait to intercept the Japanese, composed of two battleships, one cruiser and four destroyers. The Pennsylvania went alongside the ammunition ship and loaded armor piercing 14-inch projectiles. Throughout the night the six battleships WEST VIRGINIA, MARYLAND, MISSISSIPPI, TENNESSEE, CALIFORNIA and PENNSYLVANIA steamed back and forth across the northern end of the strait, waiting...

At 0130 on the morning of the 25th our PT-boats attacked the Japanese ships followed by our destroyers. The Japanese ships sustained damage but not enough to stop them. They continued on northward and, at 0325, they came within range of our battleship guns. The WEST VIRGINIA opened fire followed by other battleships and cruisers. Almost before the Japanese could train their guns, they lost two battleships and three destroyers.

My battle station was on the navigation bridge and I could see the incoming enemy shell splashes for a short time. The PENNSYLVANIA did not open fire and for a good reason. Our fire control officer saw that we were in fact training on our own destroyer units. We could see the gunfire flashes from the Japanese ships but could not actually see their ships because of the nighttime hour. We were using radar for fire control.

The Japanese had run head-on into a perfect trap. Admiral Oldendorf had executed the dream of every naval tactician, crossing the enemy's "T". By deploying his own battle line across the north of the strait, in advance of the enemy approach, he had placed the enemy units in a position where they would be subject to the concentrated fire of our force while they would only be able to reply ineffectively. Our battle line received no damage.

George Hollenbeck -
Wilmington, North Carolina

USS *Mississippi...*

"On that day, I was supposed to go to my battle station, which was below the water line, with a doctor and a corpsman. I decided to stay topside instead and not miss anything. Even then I hated regulations and was able to get away with a lot. Looking all around the Gulf, there were so many ships and sizes and much too many to count. Like other mates with my ideas as where to hide and still be safe, I got to the fantail and stood on deck, as it was very dark and the shooting started. The sky was lit up like a 4th of July celebration from all the tracer bullets. During the fighting, a battleship close to us fired its fourteen inch cannons and we watched the salvo accidentally coming our way. It took seconds for us to drop on the deck. Looking up just above our heads, we watched the shells pass over our heads very close to hitting us. Happy at not getting hit, we all watched the fighting in awe but not scared.

The next morning, seeing the many floating shell casings from our antiaircraft defense guns gave us a small idea how many shells were fired. It was a picture in my mind I will never forget."

Ed Tucker
Lake Worth, Florida

USS *Tennessee…*

I served aboard the USS Tennessee BB-43 for about 4 years, from 1-4-1942 to 12-15-1945. I was a Boatswain's Mate 1/c in charge of the 8th Division 40mm Anti-Aircraft guns.

In the late afternoon the entire crew aboard USS Tennessee was advised that we were going to meet the Japanese naval ships later that day. I thought this must be a big one as I don't think we were ever advised that we were going to start firing our 14" guns prior to an attack on the many islands that the enemy occupied.

Later that evening, I recall that the Chaplain was on the loud speaker offering a prayer for our safety as we were about to engage the enemy in a sea battle. A thought ran through my mind, I wonder if he also said any prayers for the enemy that was about to be destroyed. If so, he did not say them.

The crew manned their battle stations around 2030. I was topside but never saw any of the enemy ships as they were about 20 miles away. The 14 inch guns were firing using radar so I don't think anyone could see the damage from our guns. I was on the Quarterdeck and I do recall that one of our destroyers almost rammed the Tennessee. The destroyer made a fast starboard turn to avoid ramming us. (Continued)

The next morning, the Tennessee was cruising the sea where we had been firing our 14" guns. I did see some oil slicks and some debris, but I could not identify what it was. But I assumed it was from the enemy's ships.

I have often wondered if any of the enemy fleet escaped and headed back to their home ports...

Cliff Walton
Penn Valley, California

USS *West Virginia…*

On May 23, 1944 I was assigned to the staff of ComBatDiv 4 aboard USS *Maryland,* with RADM T. R. Ruddock in command. Much happened in the meantime, but skipping ahead to October 6, 1944, the Admiral and his staff were transferred to the USS *West Virginia,* which had received over two years of repairs and renovations. This was just about 3 weeks before the Battle of Surigao Strait.

After we had covered the landings at Leyte Gulf, the battleships were to protect the landing area from the Japanese forces. We then were advised that three Jap Task Groups were approaching Leyte Gulf. One group (Southern) was the one we encountered the morning of October 25, 1944 at Surigao. Another group, was the Bernardino Straits group, supposed to enter Leyte Gulf from the East at dawn on October 25th. The third (Northern) group was to draw the "Halsey" fleet away from the main area of attack, and then things went wrong for the Japanese.

We met them at about 3 in the morning and it was an ambush. We were waiting in position, and when we need to "Cross the T" every ship responded to the call. Every ship that is, except USS *California* who had turned the wrong way. The plain language message received came over the TBS "Look out for the California."

I don't know how many rounds were fired by other ships, but WEEVEE sent 93 rounds of 16" shells into the Jap Fleet. Most of them were direct hits. In that regard, there was an intercom conversation between the Admiral (ComBatDiv 4) and the Captain of the West Virginia as follows: "Admiral, this is the Captain. I know we have an order to commence firing at 18,000 yards, but we are now at 22,000 yards and have them in our sights. I would hate for them to get in the first shot." The Admiral replied: "I understand your point sir, but IT IS YOUR SHIP CAPTAIN."

H. C. Lacy

At this point, all the guns on USS West Virginia commenced firing with deadly effect. This is what I remember after 65 years.

I was detached from the staff of Battleship Division 4 on March 18, 1945. Eighteen days on a transport back to the states. 30 days leave (the only one I ever got,) and I spent the rest of the war as senior radioman at NAS, Terminal Island. I was discharged October 6, 1945 at Bremerton, Washington.

Harold C. Lacy
Ridgefield, Washington
(Saved 1944 beer tickets courtesy of Hal Lacy)

USS *California…*

My name is Don Douglas and I was a Signalman aboard USS *California.* It was the only ship I served on from 1943 to 1946.

During Surigao, I was at my GQ station which was at the Aft Battle Bags on the main deck. These are flags that duplicate exactly what was used up on the flag bridge. During that day, we executed tons of signals beginning at about 1400. We were very fast at raising the flags, and back then we were called "skivvy wavers". We practiced all the time and the goal was to be just as fast as any ship in the fleet. Believe me, if you were delayed taking flags down, somebody would let you know pretty quick that "your wash is dry."

But as night fell, we were not able to do visuals. Later in the war we had infra-red signal guns that were invisible to the naked eye called "Nancy Hanks", and if you had the right infra-red goggles, you were able to read them. During Surigao we did not have them…

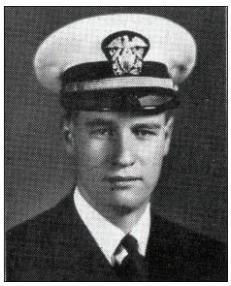
It was very dark, and sure, we saw the heavy flashes and heard many explosions, but it was really after the war, and when I had bought a book about it, that I could understood what went on at Surigao. Yes, as I learned later, the California screwed up, but from what we heard, it was due to a mis-communication between a Junior Communications Officer repeating course headings to the captain. An order was given as "turn one-five -zero", but the captain heard it as "turn one-five"… at least that is what I had heard.

The next morning, we could see oil, mattresses, debris and bodies in the water. I remember it vividly.

Don Douglas
Hindsboro, Illinois

November 10, 1944 - Explosion of USS Mount Hood

by Fred Mielke



These happenings are still well imbedded in my memory... particularly including my experiences aboard the USS Whitehurst, DE 634, as supply and disbursing officer from November 10, 1944, (the date of the explosion of Mount Hood), to April 12, 1945 (the date Whitehurst was hit by a kamikaze, – and the same date that President Roosevelt died).

In 1944, fresh out of training duty at the Navy Supply Corps School at Harvard, with the rank of ensign, I was ordered to report for duty as supply and disbursing officer of the USS *Whitehurst*, DE 634.

After many weeks of island hopping across the South Pacific to find my ship, with periodic long waits for available Navy transportation, I reached Manus Island, a small island in the Admiralty Islands, north of New Guinea, just below the equator. I checked into the receiving station, found that Whitehurst was not in port and began waiting again.

Unlike the other places I'd come from in the South Pacific, Manus was being developed as a major advance naval base in the push toward Japan. It had a large deep anchorage (Seeadler Harbor), fifteen miles long and four wide) protected by a coral reef. Adjacent, at its eastern tip, was Los Negros Island with ample space for an airstrip. Manus was alive with activity, both onshore and offshore. Every day coral was being blasted out of the harbor, scooped into trucks, and hauled away as paving for roadways being built. There were many ships coming, going, and at anchor, and there were substantial shore installations. While there, I ran into a number of friends whose ships were in. We'd visit in the Officers Club and occasionally I'd visit one of them aboard his ship.

After 25 days of waiting, I received word that Whitehurst had come into port.

November 10, 1944

It was about 0700, November 10, when I was told that Whitehurst was in port. The message was that Whitehurst would be leaving right away, and that I had 30 minutes to pack my gear, get a jeep ride to the dock, and board the ship's motor whaleboat. Needless to say I scurried, anxious to finally get aboard Whitehurst.

I was at the dock in time. The coxswain and I scrambled into the whaleboat with my gear and we went full speed out to Whitehurst, at anchor in the bay. By the time we got to the ship, it had already weighed anchor and was underway at slow speed, heading toward the harbor opening. We moved alongside it, allowing me to climb onto a ladder dropped down from the quarterdeck for me.

The coxswain took the whaleboat forward to be hauled aboard to the boat deck, my gear included. I went up the ladder, requested permission to come aboard in accordance with Navy protocol, and carried out my orders by reporting to the commanding officer, Lieutenant J. C. Horton, captain of the ship. He was on the flying bridge, in control as the ship headed toward the harbor channel and open sea.

The captain welcomed me aboard, apologized for crowded conditions that would necessitate my being bunked in the unoccupied ship's brig, introduced me to one or more nearby officers, and had one of them, Lieutenant Jim Nance, arrange to get me settled. This episode took but a few moments.

Nance and I departed the bridge and went to the wardroom, where he showed me the officers quarters, including the shower and head, and his stateroom, which he suggested I use for dressing, shaving, etc. while I was quartered in the brig (which had nothing more than two over-and-under bunks in it). He left me as I put some water in the basin and prepared to shave. This second episode, similarly, took only another few minutes. We were still in calm water inside the harbor.

Just as I was about to start shaving, there was a sharp scrunching sound as though the ship had run aground on coral. I was startled and thought that we must have missed the channel and scraped onto coral. I could imagine nothing else, although the ship did not seem to shudder or lurch.

Racing out on deck, I immediately saw a huge, roiling mushroom-shaped cloud rising rapidly into the sky. It looked awesome. It was a monstrous force moving swiftly and powerfully, rising high into the sky. As it moved upward, it displaced and shoved aside a great mass of clouds. The whole sky was turmoil of movement.

There was no question that it was an explosion. Others aboard knew immediately that it was the explosion of an ammunition ship that had been at anchor in the same part of the Bay where Whitehurst had been anchored, and that Whitehurst had just passed by on its way to the harbor entrance.

Another description of the event appears in an unofficial log of Whitehurst kept surreptitiously by George Baskin, a metalsmith. His log, for that day reads as follows:

"Arrived at Manus Island at 0600. Left at 0730 convoying 4 LSTs and 16 LCIs. On leaving, we went right past the ammunition ship, Mount Hood, that blew up. If it had happened 3 minutes earlier, everyone topside on the Whitehurst would have been killed. We were about 5000 yards from it when she exploded. I thought my ear drums were busted. Guess God is with us."

All of us aboard Whitehurst have speculated what would have been our fate if our departure from Manus that day had been delayed and Whitehurst were broadside to Mount Hood at 0803, the time of the explosion. As it was, I reported aboard perhaps ten or fifteen minutes before the explosion, at a time when the ship was moving slowly enough to allow me to jump aboard the gangway landing and the motor whaleboat to be hoisted aboard by the davits onto the boat deck. After that, the ship probably would have proceeded faster. If at that point she began making 10 knots (11.15 miles per hour) – a not unusual speed if she were headed for open sea and a waiting convoy – and continued at that speed for the next fifteen minutes, she would have added 2.88 miles of distance from the spot where I boarded her. This is remarkably close to the 5000-yard figure (2.84 miles) in Baskin's log as the distance from the explosion. It is not hard to imagine, therefore, that Whitehurst was indeed just about passing Mount Hood when I came aboard. What if I had been five or ten minutes late in reporting aboard, and delayed the ship from picking up speed to get out of the harbor? Suffice it to say that Lady Luck (or God, as Baskin puts it) was with us that day.

For me it was the first of a series of lucky strokes. The others all occurred on April 12, 1945, when Whitehurst was struck by a Kamikazi…- - **Fred Mielke**

Tom -

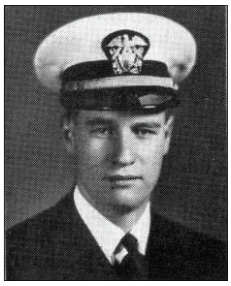
My Name is **Lew Cowden.** I was the refrigeration man on the USS *Whitehurst* (MMR 2/c). Max Crow ask me to contact you and give testimony about the picture of the Mount Hood.

You have perhaps read our story, but I will repeat it. We had just secured from bringing stores aboard. In fact we were told to get going while still unloading stores from the barge. A convoy was forming out side the bay and they were waiting for us. We started toward the open end of the bay with the barge still tied on and unloading still going on. When we secured I went below for a couple of minutes to my locker then started to go back up on deck to see what was going on. As I started up the Aft Ladder to the fantail the blast occurred. It knocked me back down the ladder. I ran to the mid ship ladder and out on deck and saw the sight you see in the pictures. The DE in the picture has got to be the Whitehurst because there were no other DE's around at the time. We were at the time convoying navy tankers and ammunition ships.

I hope this helps in your work. And thank you for helping to keep WWII memories alive.

Lew Cowden
Indianapolis, Indiana

My experience with the Kamikaze attack on USS *Whitehurst* - 12 April 1945 by Frederick W. Mielke, Supply and Disbursing Officer of Whitehurst. (10 November 1944 to 12 April 1945)



On April 12, 1945, during the Okinawa campaign, USS Whitehurst was attacked simultaneously by three kamikazes in mid-afternoon (about 1500). One, approaching from the starboard beam, was brought under fire by the ship's four starboard 20-mm automatic guns. Another, approaching from the stern, was fired upon by the ship's two aft 20 mm automatic guns, its single 1.l inch automatic gun, and its aft 3"/50 caliber gun. Both planes crashed in flames nearby.

The third plane, more distant, was fired upon as it came within range. Two friendly fighters were also attacking it from above, but these veered away from the gunfire. The plane started its dive of about 40 degrees off the port beam. It was hit with several 20-mm shots, but the pilot managed at the last moment to avoid crashing into the sea by veering upward from his original aim at the ship's waterline and crashed into Whitehurst's superstructure. The plane was a Val bomber, with a 500-pound delayed action bomb. It hit the port side of the ship, went through the CIC Room (Command Information Center) and Pilot House, both located on the deck between the Flying Bridge and the Radio Room (my battle station). [1]

After passing completely through the CIC Room and Pilot House, the plane came to rest on the starboard search light platform (where the dead pilot was found in his cockpit the next day). The bomb went through the ship and exploded in mid-air fifty feet off the starboard bow, causing heavy casualties among those in exposed battle stations on deck. All personnel in the CIC Room and Pilot House were killed. The deck of the CIC Room (the overhead of the Radio Room) was ripped open sending flaming gasoline into the Radio Room.

Of the four of us in the Radio Room, one was killed outright, one died from asphyxiation, and two of us escaped with burns.

The official casualty list from the attack was 37 dead or missing and 37 wounded – one-third of the ship's complement of about 210. [2]

My Experience

Needless to say, I survived the Kamikaze attack on Whitehurst, but, as I will explain later, Lady Luck played her part again, or I would not have made it.

On this particular GQ, we soon knew we were in the thick of some action, because shortly after we went to GQ, Whitehurst began putting out substantial, though sporadic, gunfire.

Suddenly the gunfire became much greater. In almost no time it appeared that every gun on Whitehurst was firing without let up. Although the four of us in the Radio Room could not see the action, there was no question that Whitehurst was being targeted by a Kamikaze at close quarters.

Then we were hit. The crash was loud and violent. Metal wrenched. The ship was massively shaken. We knew instantly what had happened. Fire was all about us. The heat was immediate – like being thrust into an oven. My first thought was "My God. So it happened to me. I'll be just one more sailor who died trapped in a closed compartment in a stricken ship – but My God, it's hot, it will be over quick. I won't last long." These thoughts flicked into my mind in a millisecond.

But wait! Death was not going to be instantaneous. There was some brief time to act. But do what? The situation was apparent in a glance. Loften and Yeager sat turned in their chairs, unhurt, not on fire, stunned, looking at me. On the other side of me, Paul was propped up in a strange upright position, impaled by the door of the Radio Room which had been blown off its hinges and was holding him upright like part of an A-frame made by him and the door, his head protruding through the displaced louvers in the door's upper panel. He was still. Parts of his clothing were on fire.

But do what? The only escape was out into the flaming passageway, turn aft, and go back and undog the watertight door to the boat deck. I did not believe I would survive in that flaming passageway long enough to undog that door. But not to try would be to die without a struggle. What else to do in the time left?

I looked at Loften and Yeager – I remember trying to conjure up the best command voice I could muster to indicate a degree of confidence – and said something like, "C'mon, let's go!" Or maybe, "C'mon, let's get out of here." It was probably the former, because I think it was all I could choke out.

All of this took no more than 10 seconds, if that. It bothered me not to attend to Paul, who was there motionless. I had pangs of feeling about responsibility to rescue him, but I knew it would be impossible

if he were unconscious.

However useless it may have seemed, I stopped for a swift moment and shook him, shouting in his ear. There was no response, but that brief gesture helped my conscience.[3]

I darted into the passageway with Loften and Yeager behind me and rushed aft with my eyes closed, arms shielding my face, and headed back to the dogged-down door. I hardly knew what I was doing. I could not see and was flailing blindly. The heat was intense. The next thing I recall was slipping and falling onto the coaming of the open door as someone behind climbed over me to get out.

Into the Water

I scrambled over the coaming, went a step or two starboard, and without any wasted movement, clambered over the starboard rail of the boat deck and dropped into the water.

I ended up deep in the water, and it took a while to surface. But when I did, what a glorious feeling! I had made it. Here I was afloat and alive on a bright day, with fresh air, and cool seawater washing over me. What a transformation!

But no sooner had the euphoria struck than I was immediately sucked down under the water by a powerful force. I was drawn down very deep, tumbling and twisting. I thrashed and resisted, trying to get right side up, but it was confusing. At long last, the water became less turbulent and I managed to get headed upward, kicking and thrashing toward the surface.

But I had been down a long time and I was very deep. I struggled hard to get to the surface. It seemed to take forever, and the thought crossed my mind, "My God – how ridiculous to be saved and then die drowning." For a long time I thought I would not make it, but just as I felt I could hold out no longer, I could tell I was nearing the surface. I finally broke through and gulped air – a second great feeling of unbelievable relief. I realized I had been in the wash of the propellers, and now was out of it. The ordeal was over. Now I truly was saved!

I looked about for Whitehurst, expecting to find it nearby, where I could be taken back aboard. Somehow, I expected to find the ship stopped in the water, like an automobile smashed into on a highway and no longer moving. As well ordered as I believed my thought processes were in this crisis, I realized the mind was playing tricks. The ship was off in the distance, smoke pouring forth from her fires as she proceeded even farther away. Completely irrationally, it had never occurred to me that I would be away from help after I went into the water. Not that I would have done anything differently. I had not even thought about the pros and cons of going overboard. I was on fire, and the quickest way to quench fire was to get into the water. [4] But, like some fanciful dream, I expected everything would be back to normal once I doused the fire. I would simply get back on the ship. How strangely the mind can act.

When I looked about, I saw, perhaps a hundred yards ahead of me, in the direction of the ship, two other people in the water, so I started toward them.

As I did, I noticed something strange about my hands. They had some stringy white material clinging to them. I thought there must have been a sticky white substance in the water that I had passed through. I tried unsuccessfully to wipe the stuff away, but it clung tight. After a few more attempts to get rid of the clinging substance, I came to realize that the stuff was shreds of my skin.

Up to that moment, I had no awareness of my burns. The sea was cool and felt good[5]. I had no sensation of being burned on my hands or anywhere. I felt that my dive into the sea had put out the fire on my clothes and that I had miraculously escaped without harm. But I now knew this was not so. Certainly the skin on my hands had been damaged, with shards of useless skin hanging there. Still, I felt no particular discomfort.

Swimming toward the others, I felt safe in the water. Before the war, I was not an experienced swimmer, but after signing up for the Navy, I had taken a course on survival swimming and how to tread water. At Harvard, I had once tested myself to see how long I could swim, and after forty-five minutes I knew I could swim almost indefinitely if necessary. I regarded a calm sea as friendly, not threatening.

I saw other ships about. As I made progress swimming toward the two others, I felt confident we would be rescued,

Awaiting Rescue

When I reached the others, I found they were Lieutenant Vincent Paul and an enlisted man, both from Whitehurst. I knew Paul well, but was unacquainted with the enlisted man. Paul was not hurt. As he greeted me, he suggested that I inflate my life preserver. Up to then, I had been swimming and had not even thought about the life preserver. Because my hands were too damaged to squeeze the CO-2 cartridges, Paul did the inflation. The life belt, of course, was a big help, since I was fully clothed – underwear, T-shirt, long-sleeved khaki shirt,[6] khaki pants, socks, shoes.

When I spoke to the enlisted man, I learned that he was in considerable pain. He thought his leg might be broken.

The three of us hardly talked. Although the sea was not really rough, there was a good chop to it. We put the backs of our heads to the direction of the wind and chop, which was not only the best defensive posture for the choppy water but also let us face in the direction where we might expect to see any approaching rescue vessel. Despite the effort to protect against the choppiness, I found I could not keep from swallowing seawater as it washed over my head and down my face.[7]

I don't recall any conversation about where anyone of us was when the ship was hit. Such details seemed unimportant. We all knew what had happened – and it was difficult to talk with water shipping over our heads. We were simply waiting to be rescued, as we felt we would be, and that was enough to occupy us – or at least me, because, as we waited, I also began to get quite cold. The water, which had seemed so refreshing at first, was now chilling me.

Rescue

In about a half-hour, we saw a camouflaged destroyer-type vessel (it was the USS Crosley APD 87, I later learned) approaching us. It came near, slowed and launched a boat. When the boat came to us, we were asked about any injuries. The enlisted man with us in the water did not speak, but I remember answering for him and suggesting that he be taken care of first because his leg might be broken, so they pulled him into the boat first.

I had been checking my watch and I noted that we had been in the water forty-five minutes.[8] My memory is fuzzy about how we proceeded to get aboard our rescue vessel – whether I got aboard under my own power, was lifted or helped aboard, or what. I do know that I was cold and tired and welcomed being cared for by people who seemed to know what they were doing. I was entirely willing to let them take over for me and do what was necessary.

First Aid

I didn't know where Paul and the enlisted man with us were taken, but I was laid down on a table in the crew's general mess (eating) room. They gave me a shot of morphine, which to me seemed unnecessary because I was not feeling any great pain. I dismissed it as probably just standard procedure. They also started cutting away my clothing, which again seemed wasteful and more than necessary, but at that point, I was not about to protest. They seemed quite experienced in what they were doing.

I noticed that they were also giving me blood plasma. This surprised me. I knew that wounded soldiers in the field were given blood plasma to counteract the shock effect of the trauma and that it was often a matter of life and death to administer the plasma as soon as possible to avoid death from the shock alone. So I asked if they thought I was suffering from shock. Their answer was yes. They supplemented this by saying that burns create shock and that in the case of injury from burns, it is very important to give plasma to the victim.[9]

About this time, I needed to urinate. Since I was under their control lying flat on my back on a mess table, I asked them how I could go about it. I thought, because they seemed to be medical people, [10] they might have one of those gadgets used for this purpose with bedridden males. To my surprise, they told me, "Just let it go." "Right here?" "Yeah, right here, just go ahead." So I did. It seemed strange, but I was too dim-witted to realize that it made little difference, since the place was already dripping with seawater from my clothes.

Their next step was to slather me with Vaseline (petroleum jelly) wherever I was burned and then cover those areas with layers of gauze. This meant putting bandages in places on my legs, arms and back, and completely covering up my hands and face with gauze wrapping. When they finished, I couldn't use my hands and couldn't see.

During the course of all this, I was talking with them and answering their questions, and they were answering mine. They seemed dumbfounded when I told them I had been in the radio room. They had seen the attack and did not think it possible that anyone could have escaped from where I was. They passed this information around to others who came by and all expressed absolute amazement that anyone could have escaped from there.

I learned that their ship was Crosley APD 87, a DE converted to a small attack transport that carried small groups of personnel for specialized landings – for example, the transporting of Navy Seals (Underwater Demolition Teams).

Transfer

The next step was to transfer me to a suitable place. This turned out to be a transfer a few hours later to USS Crescent City APA 21.[11] – "about 1900" according to notes I subsequently made in my Navy file. [12]

I was transported in some kind of small craft to Crescent City. I could not see or help myself with my bandaged hands, so I did nothing but let whomever it was take charge of me. Once we were at Crescent City, there was considerable commotion around it and I recall it taking some time for anyone to get to me. I was in one of those ridged wire stretchers and was lifted aboard by some mechanism. Once aboard, I was laid in a bunk located in what, from the sounds, seemed to be a small room with a number of other wounded being taken care of. I was comfortable and do not recall being in any pain. It was going into nightfall, so the time for further kamikaze attacks had passed. I rested and slept. The morphine may have had an effect

The next day, my main concern was that I was helpless. I could not see and could not use my hands. I could walk, although it hurt a bit when blood rushed into a bandaged lower leg. I worried about how I could get out of that room if the ship were hit. I knew the ship was not underway and was somewhere off Okinawa, but not sure where.[13] I therefore assumed it was as vulnerable to another kamikaze attack as any other ship. I thought it might still be stationed off the beach where it had landed troops.[14] Attendants in the room were busy, but I managed to ask one of them about my concern. He assured me someone would lead me if I needed to get out. I knew of course that would be the intention, but I wanted some assurance I would not be forgotten. I also knew it was an intention that might not be able to be fulfilled.[15]

My Navy records show that I was aboard Crescent City for the next four days. I don't recall much about those four days – all of which were spent in that bunk – except for the day after my arrival. There was a radio in the room, and during that next day an announcement came over it that President Roosevelt had died.

This of course was major news, and the attention given to it on the radio was not surprising. But it gave me a strange feeling – all this attention to one man's dying when all about me I knew of carnage and death in wholesale numbers. Each loss of a human life out here was just as tragic on a personal level as the loss of any other human, and just as wasteful of one of God's wonderful creations. But obviously the life of a world leader was something different and justified an enormous amount of attention. I did not resent the attention, nor did I think it should not be given. It just left me with a very strange feeling, which even now comes over me as I write.

My stay aboard Crescent City for the next three days was just a temporary holding action until I could be transferred elsewhere. I received no further treatment, nor did any seem necessary. My bandages remained in place. Time just passed.

Hospital Ship and Homeward

On April 16, 1945, I was transferred to the hospital ship, USS Hope AH 7, which after a few days left for Saipan. By then my burns had been rebandaged and were healing well. I was transferred to the Naval Hospital at Saipan on April 22, 1945, and was evacuated by air on May 15, 1945. Arriving at Hawaii on May 16, 1945, I was transferred to the Naval Hospital at Aiea Heights. Later, in an outpatient status with burns healing nicely, I visited with shipmates aboard Whitehurst. The ship was under repair at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard and, among other things, was being outfitted with reels of electric cable in place of her torpedo tubes, so she could use her steam-driven electric drive generators to supply shore power when the invasion of Japan took place.

From these visits, I learned for the first time what had happened to the ship and to so many of my shipmates on the day of the attack. I learned also of the blown-away door to the boat deck that had allowed Yeager and me to escape to safety.

I was detached from Aeia Heights Naval Hospital on June 12, 1945 and provided transportation aboard the U.S. Naval Unit S.S Matsonia to San Francisco, where I arrived on June 17 and was transferred to the Naval Receiving Hospital in San Francisco. Unfortunately, my hospitalization was not over, because I came down with Hepatitis B from the blood plasma given me on the day of the attack. So on July 3,1945 I was transferred from the Receiving Hospital to The Naval Hospital at Oakland (Oak Knoll).
I was not discharged from treatment at Oak Knoll until August 29, 1945. By then, Japan had surrendered. World War II was over...

[1] Being closed up in the Radio Room, I did not witness the attack. The details recounted here are from the Whitehurst's official battle report and from conversations with shipmates.

[2]The 37 wounded figure is taken from published Navy reports. However, on April 13, the day after the attack, J. C. Horton, the commanding officer of Whitehurst reported in a letter to the commander of the task group in which Whitehurst was serving the name, rank, and serial number of the casualties. He listed 31 dead, 6 missing, 22 wounded (as the only wounded officer, I headed the list) and 5 "Death[s] on board hospital

ship to date." A copy of that letter is in my Navy file.

[3] My conscience was even more relieved when I learned from shipmates months later that Paul had died instantly of a broken neck, undoubtedly caused by the Radio Room door slamming into him. He was found with his head grotesquely sloshing back and forth as he lay on the deck of the Radio Room in water accumulated from the fire fighting.

[4] Subconsciously, I am sure I was influenced to go overboard by the feeling that I was in safe waters, not far from that small island group now in our control, Kerama Retto, which I looked at daily as we patrolled back and forth off its shore only a mile or so away. I remember feeling somewhat assured by this proximity and the thought that it might even be possible to swim ashore, if it were ever necessary. Had Whitehurst been operating alone far at sea, my subconscious decision, I'm sure, would have been to suffer onboard.

[5] Whitehurst took daily readings of sea temperature. At Okinawa, the readings were about 72 degrees.

[6] For flash burn protection, all Navy personnel were under orders to wear long-sleeved shirts rolled down to the wrists. The fact that my hands turned out to be burned worse than my arms shows the wisdom of this rule.

[7] Since the wind and chop were coming from the direction of Kerama Retto, this buffeting action by an otherwise calm sea made me realize how impossible it would have been for me to swim to one of those seemingly close islands and the false comfort I had taken in thinking that I might be able to. (Footnote 4.)

[8] I had been keeping track of the elapsed time in the water and have remembered it ever since, but I was not particularly noting the time of day. Months later, before I knew the actual time of the attack, I made a handwritten entry in my Navy file giving the time we were picked up by Crosley as "about 1530." It was years later before I knew the actual time of the attack.. The Navy's "Secret Action Report" of the attack, now declassified, states that Whitehurst "Sounded general quarters and all hands manned battle stations" at 1433 and that the "approximate" time the plane crashed the ship was 1502. By this estimate, my handwritten note was only fifteen minutes off.

[9] The reason burns can lead to shock, I subsequently learned, is that substantial body fluid (blood plasma) can ooze out through the burns.

[10] I was probably in the hands of a pharmacist's mate (the navy term for what the army would call a medical corpsman). Small ships, such as DE's did not have doctors, but had petty officers with a pharmacist's rating. All these petty officers, of course, had Navy training for their duties, but they came from various civilian backgrounds. Aboard the Whitehurst, we found it amusing that our pharmacist's mate had been an undertaker in his civilian life.

[11] An APA was a large attack transport used to bring troops to land on enemy territory. There were about 250 of them commissioned in World War II. According to her ship's history, Crescent City had been converted to a temporary hospital evacuation ship in March and had arrived at Kerama Retto on April 6, "[r]eceiving casualties from the beaches of Okinawa and from other ships….[She] remained at Okinawa receiving casualties and other transients until the end of the war."

[12] I entered these notes months later on the Navy's paper work, which followed me. My Navy file shows that I received orders dated that very day of April 12 (undoubtedly delivered to the Medical Officer of Crescent City without my intervention) signed by Whitehurst's commanding officer, J. C. Horton, reading as follows:

"You are hereby detached from all duties assigned you aboard this ship; will report to the Medical Officer, USS CRESCENT CITY (APA-21) for medical treatment… Diagnosis as follows: #2508 - Burns, Extremities/Key Letter "K""

[Enclosed were my Navy Pay Record (so I could get paid), my Health Record, and my Officer's Qualification Jacket]

[13] Upon writing these memoirs, and researching the history of Crescent City, I learned that the ship was anchored in Kerama Retto, a relatively safe place to be, because it was ringed with small mountainous islands, making kamikaze approaches difficult. In addition it always had a concentration of ships there, which could bring some awesome firepower to bear on a kamikaze attack.

[14] Again, it was not until doing research for these memoirs that I learned that this particular APA ship was no longer an attack transport, but had been converted to a hospital evacuation ship.

[15] My concern would not have been so intense if I had known that this APA was not serving as an attack transport. As an attack transport, which I thought it was, I regarded my presence there as something unusual, where I could easily be overlooked in an emergency involving their regular duties.

####

Editor's Notes:

In 1995, Fred Mielke had an opportunity to go aboard the former USS *Slater* as she was just beginning her restoration as a museum ship. Included with his stories, Fred sent this photo from that visit and which shows him standing next to what would be the same watertight weather deck door of USS *Whitehurst* leading out to the boat deck.

The photo below was taken at a USS *Whitehurst* reunion showing shipmate MMR 2/c Lew Cowden on the left (Lew Cowden's Mt. Hood explosion comments are found on Page 12...) - Fred Mielke is on the right.

USS WHITEHURST (DE-634)
Class: Buckley
Type: TE (turbine-electric drive, 3" guns)
Displacement: 1,400 tons (std) 1,740 tons (full)
Dimensions: 306' (oa), 300' (wl) x 36' 9" x 13' 6" (max)
Operational and Building Data
Laid down by Bethlehem Steel Co., San Francisco CA on 21 March 1943
Launched 5 September 1943,
Commissioned 19 November 1943
Decommissioned 27 November 1946,
Recommissioned 1 September 1950
June-July 1957, ship starred in the 20th Century-Fox movie "The Enemy Below"
Decommissioned 6 December 1958.
Recommissioned 2 October 1961 for the Berlin Crisis,
Decommissioned, placed "in service" 1 August 1962
Out Of Service 12 July 1969, Stricken 12 July 1969.
Sunk as target 28 April 1971 by USS Trigger (SS-564)
Source: Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships

With thanks to Tim Rizzuto, USS Slater's Executive Director, Volunteer Curator Pat Perella, and volunteer Max Crow, these photos show USS Slater's Radio Room with configuration identical to that of USS *Whitehurst* in World War II.

The last photo below shows Fred Mielke's fiery escape route from the radio room, through two doors, and over the side...

"I was the only one of the four of us in the radio room who went over the side. One man was killed outright, one retreated into the captain's cabin and died of asphyxiation, and one went down the ladder (facing the WT door) going from the boat deck to the main deck. He suffered very severe burns before the fire on him could be put out." -- **Fred Mielke**

HONOR FLIGHT

Contact: Judy Lemmons

Office: 801.678.1254

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

www.honorflight.org

Email: pr@honorflight.org

Sixty-five years ago the guns fell silent. The most horrific conflict of all time came to an end. Some 16,000,000 young American men and women left their homes for places they had never heard of, for a purpose undefined, and a conflict unimaginable. They put on the uniform of the United States of America and served with honor. At the conclusion of the war, approximately 406,000 did not return. For those who did, they came home, went back to work and simply got on with their lives. In the spring of 2004, the WWII Memorial was dedicated in honor of their service and sacrifice.

The mission of the Honor Flight Network is to take America's veterans to Washington D.C. to visit those memorials dedicated to their service, free of charge. Top priority is given to America's most senior veterans – survivors of WWII and any veteran with a terminal illness wishing to see their memorial. The inaugural Honor Flight took place in May 2005 with six small planes flying out of Springfield, Ohio, taking 12 WWII veterans to see their memorial. In August of 2005, an ever expanding waiting list of veterans led our transition to commercial and charter carriers. Today, we continue working aggressively to expand our program across the nation.

Approximately 1,200 WWII veterans are dying every day in America

The average life expectancy for an American male is 74.4 years – while the youngest WWII veteran is over 79 years old

Sky-rocketing healthcare costs have drained the life savings of most WWII veterans and their spouses

Veterans of WWII have waited over 60 years for THEIR memorial. Most of them have been unable to visit it - until NOW

Since our program began in the Spring of 2005, the Honor Flight Network has safely transported over 18,000 veterans from all across America to D.C.

Our goal for 2009 is 25,000 – time is not on their side

We currently have 74 hubs (organizations) in 32 states

The numbers flown: 2005: 137 vets; 2006: 891 vets 2007: 6000 vets; 2008: 11,136 vets Thus far in 2009 since 1 April – we have safely transported an additional 7,100 vets

The Honor Flight is a non-profit 501c3 organization. Honor Flight receives NO government funding. Honor Flight relies heavily on individual, corporate and organizational donations. All donations are tax deductible and greatly appreciated. We DO NOT accept donations from WWII veterans; they have given enough…

Editor's Note: Thanks to Honor Flight, an estimated 42,000 World War II veterans will have visited *their* Washington, D.C. Memorial by the end of 2009… *(Philadelphia Inquirer 8 Sept 2009)*

Honor Flight - New Jersey by Jim Maher

I was born at a time when the outcome of World War Two was very much in doubt. During my first days of life, Americans, and our allies, landed on the beaches in France so that I could grow up in freedom. I have always had an abiding respect and admiration for the men and women who risked everything and saved the world; now my world.

I wanted to go too and do my part. I learned that Pam Pontano, a teacher at Williamstown High School was organizing a group with the help of VFW Post 1616.

I wanted in. I filled out the necessary paperwork and was notified that I would be a Guardian on the next trip. Guardian is the title of the person who escorts the veteran throughout the day. Each veteran has a Guardian.

On June 6, 2009, at 7:30 am I arrived at Williamstown High School to join up with Ed Haas, a fellow Battleship New Jersey Restoration volunteer.

We can Thank God that other events intervened, the war ended without an invasion of Japan, and today Ed and I would be making this "Honor Flight" visit to Washington and to the World War II Memorial. I was also proud to be assigned as Ed's "Guardian" on this trip of honor to Washington DC. Ed is one of those WW II veterans who would have been in the middle of that horrific invasion scheduled for the Japanese home islands.

L/R World War II/Battleship New Jersey volunteers Ed Haas, Joe Donnelly, Russ Collins (USS New Jeresey crewman), Frank Randolph, and Charlie Stewart.

Jim Maher and WWII Vet Ed Hass

We weren't alone in our trip that day. Besides Ed, there were 4 other WWII veterans and long-time battleship New Jersey volunteers, plus 61 WWII veterans, each with his, or her, assigned Guardian. All were part of the Honor Flight Foundation's effort to give WWII veterans the chance to see the National World War Two Memorial - *their memorial.*

There was also the Williamstown HS Marching Band and Color Guard. There were Junior ROTC Cadets, high school staff, and scores of students just there to help. Members of VFW post 1616 also came. All to help honor these 61 men and one woman who helped to save the world more than sixty years ago.

After a hearty breakfast provided by the high school we boarded three chartered buses that would take us to Washington. Besides Ed Haas and me, the four other BB-62 volunteers and fellow "shipmates". who would make the trip. WWII Veterans Russ Collins, Joe Donnelly, Frank Randolph and Charlie Stewart.

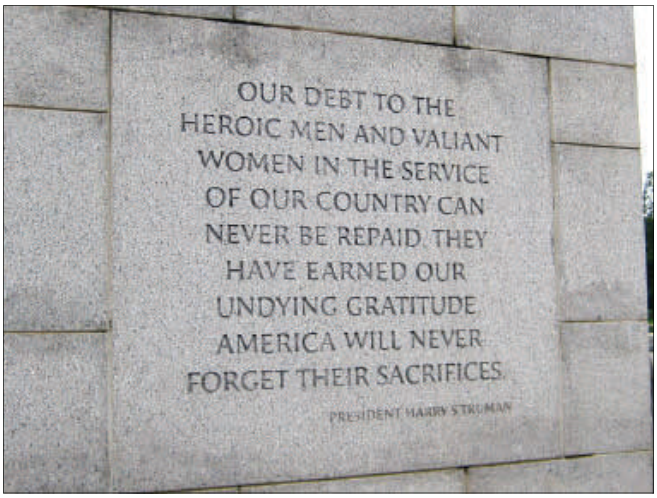
Each officer stood at attention and saluted these 62 veterans as the buses passed. Emergency Medical Technicians brought up the rear .

The National World War Two Memorial construction effort was begun in earnest on December 10, 1987 when Representative Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) first introduced legislation authorizing the establishment of the Memorial. Legislation was also introduced in 1989, 1991 and finally 1993 when Congress authorized its construction on May 25, 1993. President Bill Clinton signed that legislation into law the same day.

After more than eight years of haggling over the design and location, construction was begun on September 4, 2001 and the Memorial was dedicated on May 29, 2004, nearly 59 years after the end of World War II.

After a brief stop at a Maryland highway rest area, the caravan continued on to the nation's Capitol. We arrived just around noon and were provided with a box lunch. We met veterans from other groups who had come from Ohio, Kentucky and other states to visit the Memorial. All WWII Veterans and members of

other Honor Flight groups. All coming to visit their long overdue memorial, and to read this engraved comment by President Harry S Truman - one of many that now testify to the sacrifices of the Greatest Generation.



After posing for a photograph, all veterans and guardians lined up to enter the Memorial as a group. The memorial was crowded with tourists who, when they noticed the Veterans, stopped, stepped aside, and applauded as these old warriors passed by, led by the ROTC color guard. For my part, I felt as an interloper hearing the applause and seeing the tears in tourist's eyes.

After a wreath laying ceremony at the New Jersey pillar and a moment of silence, each veteran explored the memorial at his or her leisure. Here and there a tourist would approach a veteran, and was often heard saying... 'Thank you for your service" "Thanks for what you did." Or simply, "Welcome home."

When they were finished, the group again boarded the buses for the brief trip to the Lincoln Memorial. From there it was a short walk to the stainless steel statues of the Korean War Veterans Memorial and the black granite wall of the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial. Here these WWII Veterans took the opportunity to honor veterans who fought in America's later wars.

All then boarded the buses again for the trip to Virginia for the Marine Corps War Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. After a group photograph, a guide from Honor Flight related the history of the Memorial and the story of the five Marines and one Navy Corpsman who raised the American Flag over Mount Suribachi in February 1945.

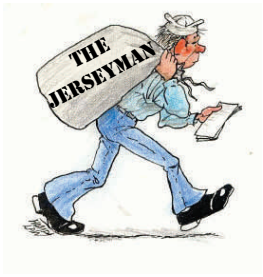
After boarding the bus again, we made a quick trip past the Air Force Memorial and the Pentagon Building. The repair to the damage from the 9/11 attack was evident in the slight color difference in the exterior walls The memorial to those who died that day in the building and on the airplane was visible in the courtyard in front.

Along the way, on the trip back to Williamstown we stopped for dinner. Veterans and guardians relaxed and remembered the day's activities as we enjoyed a buffet. Then, back on the bus for the final leg back home.

We arrived back at Williamstown H.S., at about 8:30 p.m. As the guardians and Veterans exchanged parting thoughts I heard one veteran ask his guardian " What a day! How can I thank you?" " You already did; 65 years ago," was the heartfelt reply…

Volunteer/Guardian Jim Maher
Cherry Hill, New Jersey

MAILCALL…



USS *New Jersey* collides with USS *Franks*...

I don't remember the date anymore, but I can remember when we hit USS *Franks*. It was at night and I heard that our port anchor went through the destroyer's bridge and almost took it off. It did a lot of damage. By the time I got top side, Franks was far astern, and another DD had it lit up.

I'll tell you a little story. The Quartermasters aboard USS *New Jersey* all slept in our own compartment - in the superstructure. It wasn't long before someone got the idea that if we ever took a hit there, we would wipe out all of the ship's Quartermasters... so they moved us all over the ship. I was assigned a compartment in the bow, and it was crowded and hot. When this collision happened with the Franks, I thought we had taken a torpedo! From that day on I slept in the primary conn. It was cooler there and not as crowded.

Norm Benson, QM3,
USS *New Jersey* - WWII
Lisle, Illinois

USS Utah...

Tom - I don't want to be a "nitpicker" here, but **Jack Vaessen** was cut out of the bottom of the Utah ***during*** the Japanese attack. (3Q-2009 USS *Utah* article-Pg, 16).

The rescue party, led by young Warrant Carpenter Stanley Sermanski, was under Japanese machine gun strafing fire while using the cutting torch. Stan Sermanski passed away last month while in his 90's. His, and the other members of that party from the Utah and Raleigh were the first real heroes I saw in WW2 and thereafter. I just thought you would want to know, and to set the record straight in *The Jerseyman.*

Bill Hughes, RMCM, USN (Retired)
USS Utah survivor, 7 December 1941
Grand Prairie, Texas

USS Utah…

Recently, **Jack Vaessen,** who now resides in San Mateo, California, sent us a copy of his Navy Cross citation:

"For distinguished service in the line of his profession, extraordinary courage, and disregard of his own safety during the attack on the Fleet in Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, by Japanese forces on December 7, 1941. Although realizing that the ship was capsizing and having been ordered to abandon ship, Fireman Vaessen remained at his post at the forward distribution board on USS UTAH and kept lights burning as long as possible, later being rescued through a hole cut in the bottom of the ship."
S/ For the President,
Frank Knox
Secretary of the Navy

Editor's Notes:
USS *Whitehurst* (DE-634)

This ship's bell photo from USS *Whitehurst*, may look familiar. It was originally sent to *The Jerseyman* by Max Crow, a volunteer aboard the museum ship USS *Slater* (DE-766), the last Destroyer Escort remaining afloat today out of 563 that were built during WWII.

The Whitehurst's bell and brief story, (with a photo of former USS *Whitehurst* crewman Max Crow 1951-1955) was featured in the 3Q-2006 issue of *The Jerseyman* - Page 21… but it did not stop there.

After the last two USS *Utah* eyewitness story issues, Max Crow, and BM1 (SW) Charles Brown, USN/Ret., both helped in getting us connected with Fred Mielke, and to talk about his two extraordinary stories while serving aboard USS *Whitehurst*. Many thanks to Max Crow and Charles Brown for their help.

Special thanks are also due to Fred Mielke for permitting us to print his stories, which were written as a personal memoir for his family.

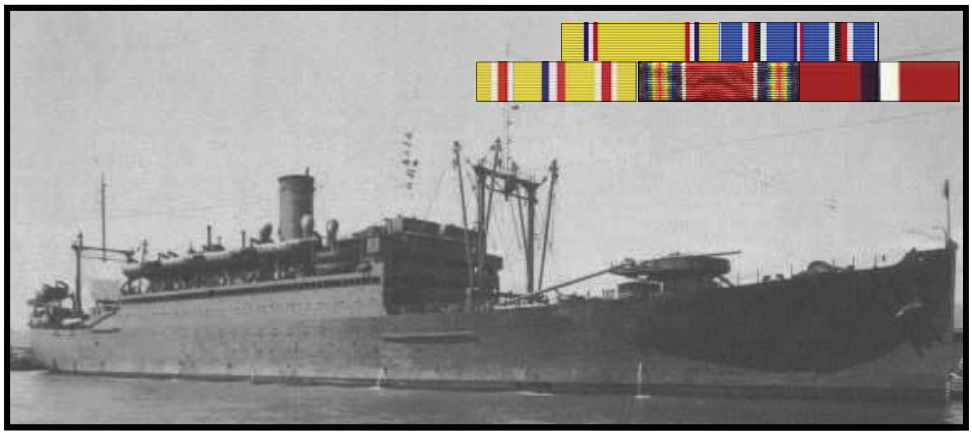
Fred Mielke lives today in Cupertino, California. - TH

Editor's Notes: *The Jerseyman* asks All Hands for ***your*** World War II, Korean War experiences! Most of us have a long-remembered story from a former ship, station, squadron or Marine Division, and we ask that you consider sending it on to us at *The Jerseyman*. A full-color copy of the issue (with your story,) will be sent to you at publication. ***Thanks…*** - TH

SHIP'S BELLS…

USS *Wharton (AP-7)*

Named for Lieutenant Colonel **Franklin Wharton.** Born in Philadelphia on 23 July 1767, he was commissioned Captain of Marines on 3 August 1798.
On 7 March 1804, Wharton took office as the third Commandant of the Marine Corps.



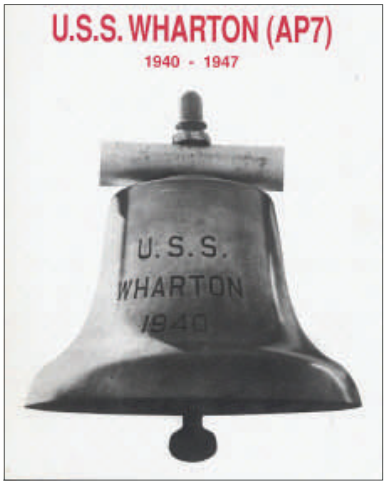
Displacement 21,900
Length. 535'2"; Beam. 72'0"; Draft. 31'3"
Speed.16.5 k
Complement. 666
Laid down, 8 October 1918, by New York Shipbuilding Co., Camden, N.J. as
SS *Southern Cross*, a passenger/cargo ship, for Muson Steamship Line
Launched, 20 July 1919. Delivered, 24 September 1921
Acquired by the US Navy from the Maritime Commission, 8 November 1939
Converted for Naval Service at Todd Shipbuilding Corp., Brooklyn, N.Y.
Commissioned **USS *Wharton* (AP-7)**, 7 December 1940, New York Navy Yard, Brooklyn, N.Y.
During WWII **USS *Wharton*** was assigned to the Asiatic-Pacific Theater.

Marshall Islands operations
Occupation of Kwajalein and Majuro Atolls, 31 January to 15 February 1944

Marianas operation
Capture and occupation of Guam, 21 to 29 July 1944

Okinawa Gunto operation
Assault and occupation of Okinawa Gunto, 19 to 22 May 1945

Decommissioned, 26 March 1947
Returned to the Maritime Commission, 27 March 1947, for lay up in National Defense Reserve Fleet, Olympia, WA.
Struck from the Naval Register, 4 April 1947
Final Disposition, sold for scrapping, 21 March 1952
USS *Wharton* was awarded three battle stars for her World War II service
(Source: Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships)
Her ship's bell is currently mounted in a place of honor at the First Marine Division Headquarters, Camp Pendleton, California



Submitted by: Hugh Tassey
Secretary/Treasurer USS *Wharton* AP-7 Association
El Cerrito, California

BATTLESHIP DAYS... BY HAMP LAW

Logo courtesy of Maritime Artist and former USS NEW JERSEY crewman, **James A. Flood**

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Tom Helvig, CTRCM, USN (Retired - 1975)
Volunteer Writer/Editor *The Jerseyman*
68 Boothby Drive
Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054
email: Thelvig@aol.com
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